

MODIS/Aqua, AIRS, MLS and CloudSat Tracks Intercomparison.

(NASA/GES DISC, A-Train Data Depot)

The intent of this document is to offer initial glimpse at the ground tracks formed by the fields of view (FOV) of the A-Train participating instruments. All of them are complex enough, and thus detailed knowledge of their ground coverage is not possible to acquire by going through this one document only.

Note the use of the expression “FOV” here. The tracks pictured below are not those of the platforms carrying the instruments. Rather, they depict the geolocations assigned by retrieval algorithms to data that in general are radiances and reflectances at Level 1B, and final science parameters at Level 2, of processing. This distinction is particularly important for the MLS instrument, where the 3000 km boresight of the instrument results in correspondingly 3000-km separation between the platform ground point and the retrieval FOV at any time.

Another note relates to the imaging plane of scanning instruments like MODIS, AIRS, MLS, and OMI. MLS is distinct in that it scans in vertical direction in a plane close to tangent to the platform track. Thus its resultant cross-track width is about one FOV, that is about 10 km, and that width is mostly coming from the antenna aperture. MODIS, AIRS, and OMI, however, are imaging in the nadir cross-track plane. Whether using a cross-track scanning mirror (MODIS and AIRS), or a push-broom mode with wide-field of view telescope (OMI), these imagers yield wide cross-track swaths, that may have more than thousand of frames (pixels) across-track, that can cover more than 2000 km. For the sake of clarity of the presentation, however, we ignore the cross-track dimension of these imagers, and depict only tracks of singular, “collocated”, FOVs, thus emphasizing the relations between FOV sizes and locations.

Real data from August 6, 2006, are used throughout this presentation.

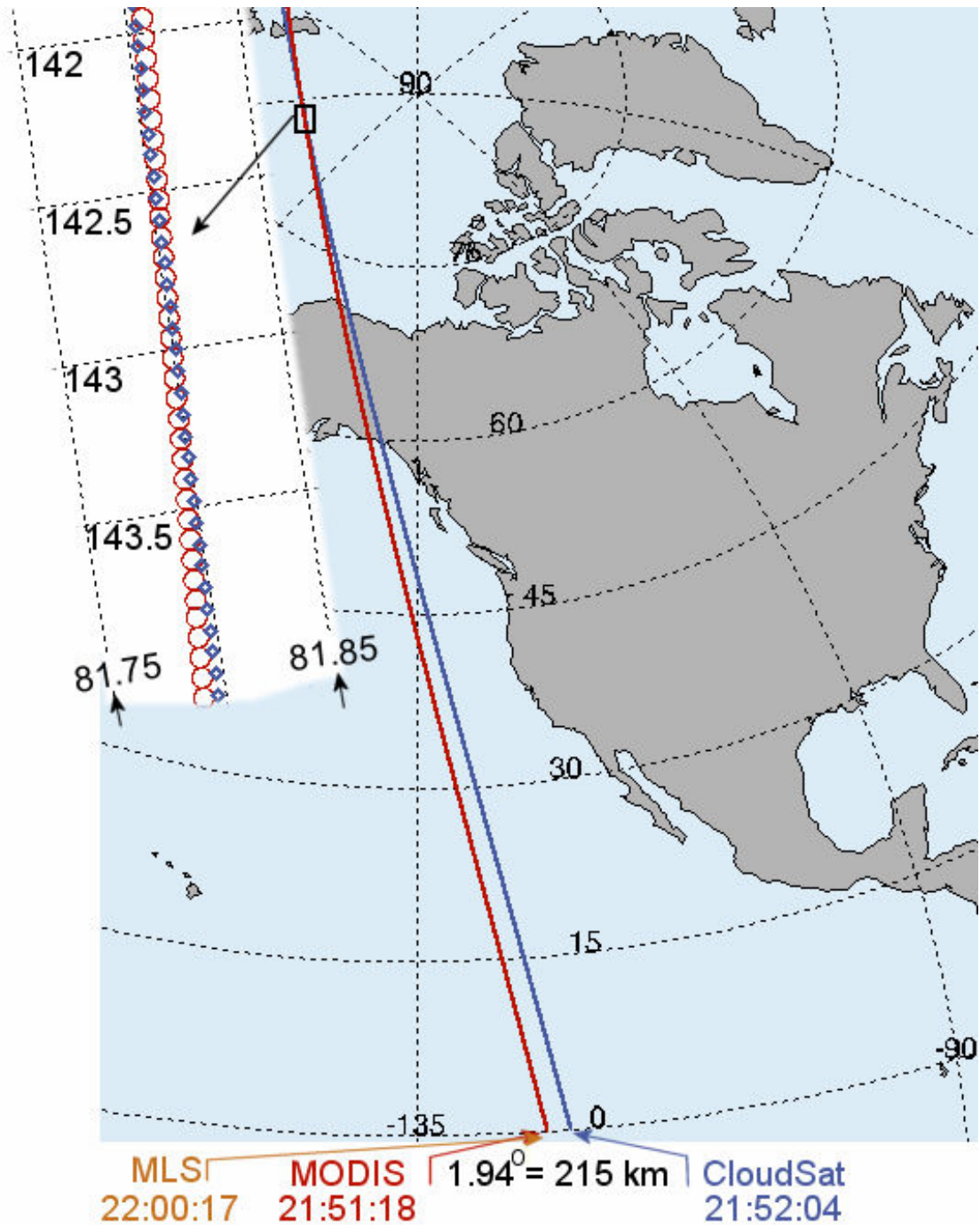


Figure 1. Ground tracks of fields of view (FOV) of MODIS/Aqua nadir pixel, and CloudSat, both at processing Level 1B. MLS FOV are practically overlapping with MODIS nadir, and at that scale cannot be distinguished. The maximum track separation appears at the Equator, and is a complex result of platforms orbital characteristics, and Earth rotation. The cross-track separation is a function of latitude, and the insert shows latitudinal and longitudinal details of the tracks intersection at the North Pole. MODIS/Aqua 1-km FOVs are shown to scale in the inset as red circles, whereas the blue diamonds just show the position of the time stamps (aggregated rays) of CloudSat Level

1B retrieval. The actual size of the CloudSat Level 1B retrieved (resultant) FOV is shown in Fig.2.

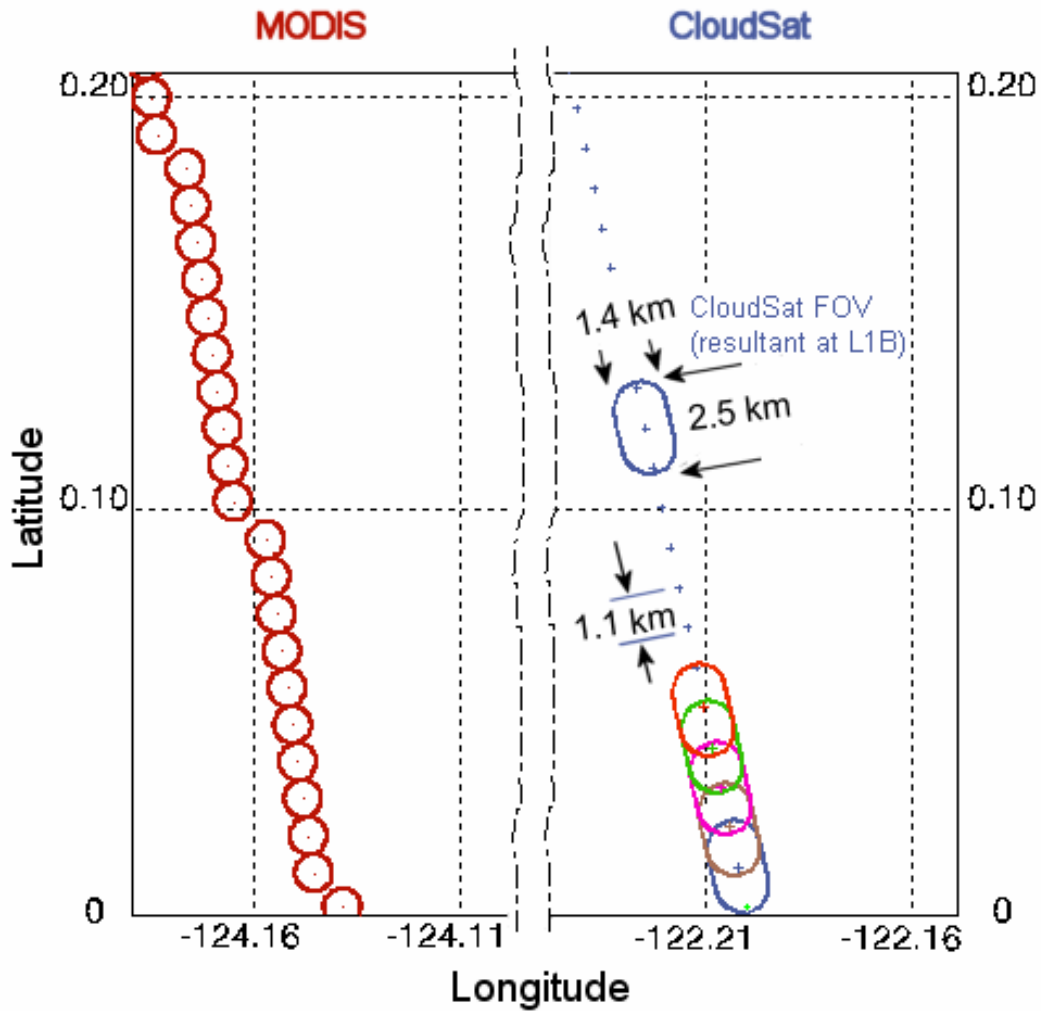


Figure 2. MODIS/Aqua 1-km nadir pixel (red circles) compared with the resultant size of the CloudSat Level 1B FOV, both shown to real scale of the map projections. The CloudSat FOV results from 0.16 sec of aggregation time during which the platform travels 1.1 km. Thus one aggregated CloudSat ray is recorded every 1.1 km in Level 1B. Given the radius of the CloudSat raw antenna footprint of 0.7 km, the resultant FOV has a long axis (along-track) of 2.5 km, and a short axis (cross-track) of 1.4 km.

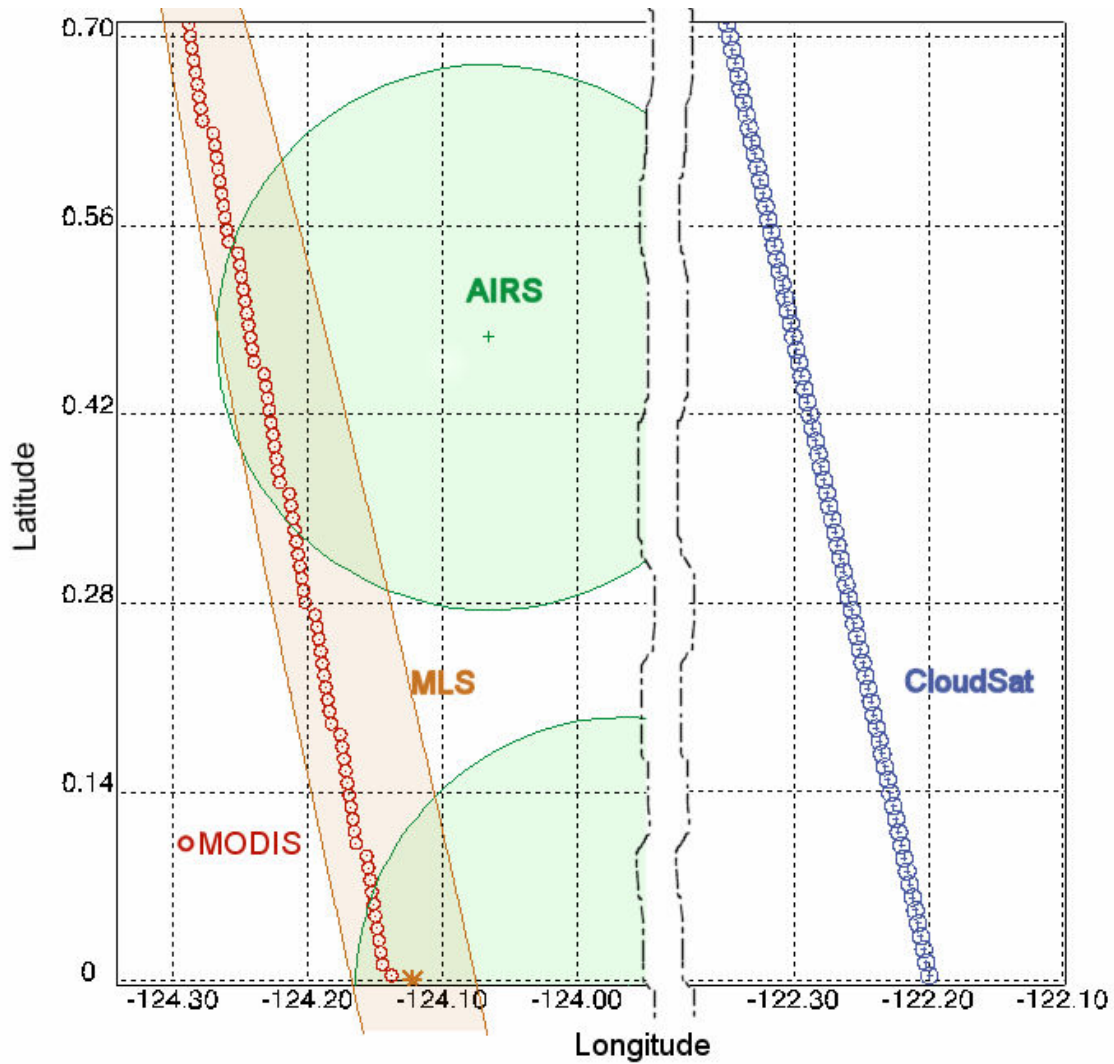


Figure 3. Relative sizes of MODIS Level 1B 1-km nadir pixels, the closest AIRS Level 2 final retrieval pixels, and a MLS FOV. The CloudSat track is presented here as a sequence of raw, 1.4-km diameter, antenna footprints to depict its swath width. (The actual CloudSat FOV size and shape at Level 1B are shown in Fig.2). The MLS FOV is a complex result of the instrument vertical scanning, platform orbital speed, and science retrieval. To acquire a feeling of the complexity of MLS profiles retrieval, Users should refer to: http://mls.jpl.nasa.gov/data/eos_overview_atbd.pdf. For the sake of this simplified presentation, however, the MLS FOV is depicted here as an ellipse drawn to scale of the map portion shown. The asterisk indicates the reported location of that particular MLS retrieved profile.

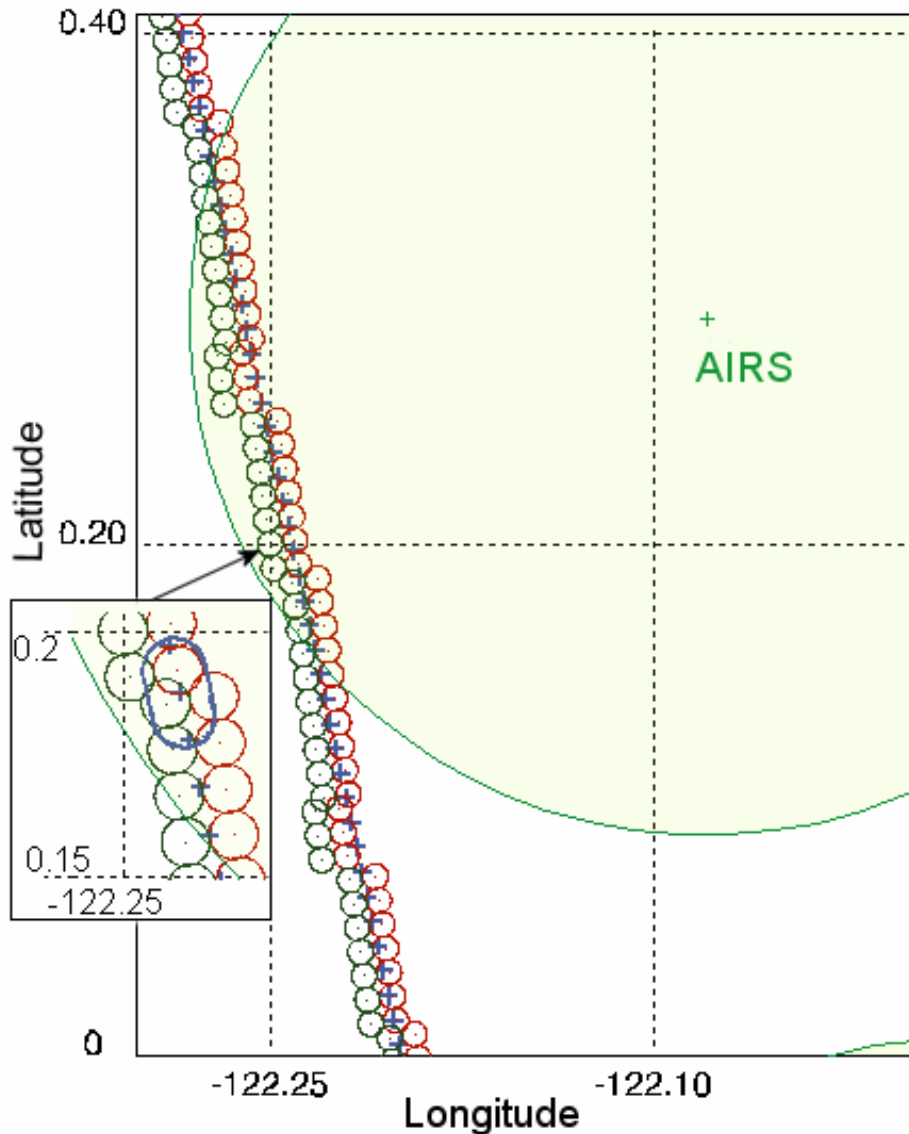


Figure 4. Parts of the collocated MODIS/Aqua operational subset (circles), relative to the positions of the CloudSat Level 1B FOV (crosses), and the closest AIRS Level 2 final retrievals. One actual CloudSat FOV is shown to scale in the inset for comparison. Red circles represent the median MODIS pixels in the collocated subset, i.e. frame #6, while greens are frame #5, if the narrow-swath subset is taken. The subset MODIS pixels depicted here are of 1.1-km size: given the farthest separation of MODIS nadir and CloudSat at the Equator, Fig.1, the collocated subset here is about 200 pixels from the nadir. The separation of the closest AIRS pixel from the CloudSat track clearly draws attention, and Figs.5 and 6 are provided to reveal closer details.

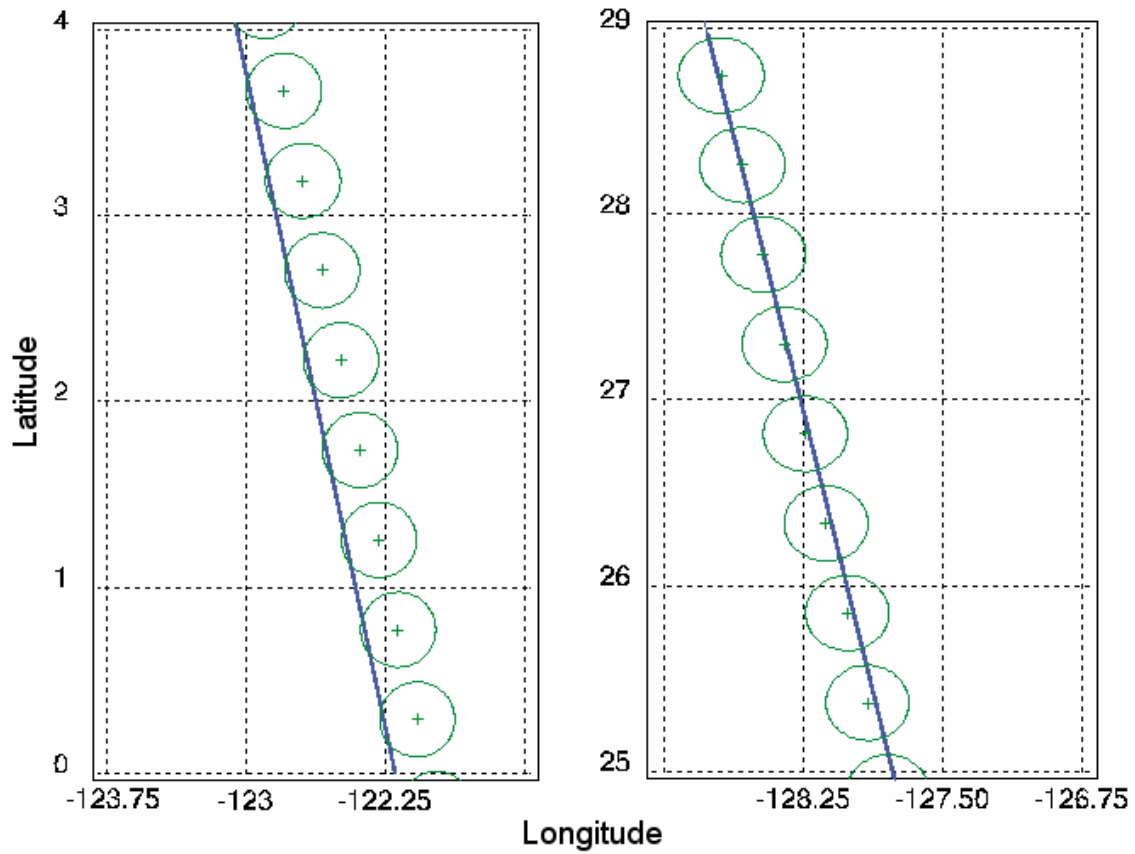


Figure 5. Separation of the CloudSat swath, shown to scale and thus appearing as thick blue line at that scale, and the closest AIRS final retrieval FOV (green ellipses). The closest AIRS FOV is about 20-km off the CloudSat track at the Equator. However, thanks to their orbital declinations, the Aqua and CloudSat ground tracks separation is a function of latitude, Fig.1. This results in varying separation of the closest AIRS FOV and CloudSat, Fig.6.

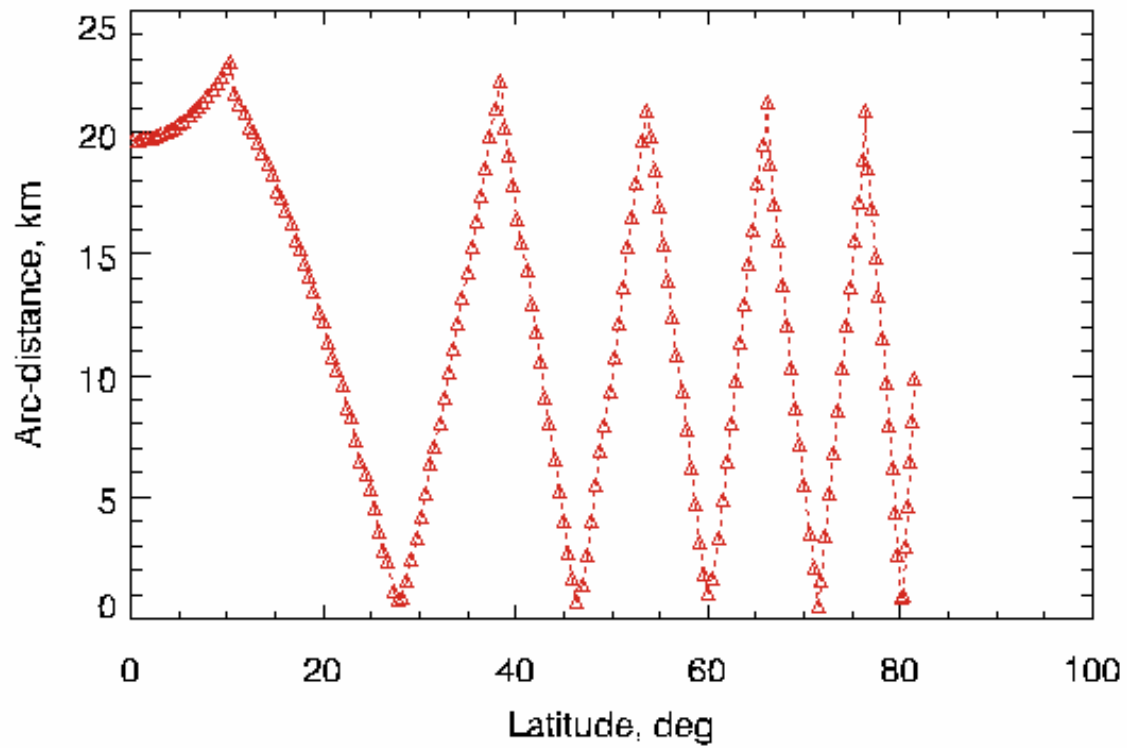


Figure 6. Variation of the arc-distance between CloudSat and the closest AIRS FOV's in the final retrieval.